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ABSTRACT

The intergenerational systems approach predicts that family interaction styles learned in the family of origin will be perpetuated in future interpersonal relationships. To investigate the relationship between the perceptions of atmosphere in the family of origin and current family, a normative sample of married couples completed the Family Environment Scale. Husbands' ratings between current families and families of origin revealed an emphasis on personal growth dimensions, while wives emphasized relationship and systems maintenance in addition to personal growth dimensions. Couples' ratings for their current families were similar on all dimensions. Results indicate that the Family Environment Scale is a promising instrument for use in intergenerational family research. (JAC)

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AN INTERGENERATIONAL STUDY OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE FAMILIES OF MARRIED COUPLES

by

Paul Jordan Carpenter

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School
of the University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Family as an Intergenerational System

A number of prominent family theorists (Bowen, 1978; Framo, 1976; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1976; and Minuchin, 1974) have all stressed the importance of viewing the family as an intergenerational system. This perspective asserts that values and interaction patterns of past generations have an impact on ideas and interaction patterns of present generations. Through continuance of these patterns by the present generation, future generations will continue to be influenced by the reverberations of previous forces unless significant changes occur at some point.

Theoretical and therapeutic approaches based on the family as an intergenerational system endorse a common goal: to free members of the present family by facilitating movement back to their families of origin to resolve unfinished business with their parents. Central to this goal is the importance of the boundaries within the family system and between the family system and its external environment. Boundaries are the rules defining who participates in the family and how. The notion of boundaries allows for the

analysis of the whole family structure, its attempts at working out the differentiation of its members, and its attempts at regulating distance and closeness within the family. Minuchin (1974) postulates three basic types of boundaries--enmeshed, disengaged, and clear--which refer to relationship styles in the family system. The family with clear boundaries is capable of providing for its members both a sense of attachment and separateness. The family characterized by enmeshed boundaries provides a sense of attachment but is deficient in providing a sense of separateness. The family with disengaged boundaries provides the sense of separateness, but its members experience a fuzzy sense of attachment. Families with either enmeshed or disengaged boundaries foster an incomplete self-identity for the individual. For example, if a developing individual is deprived of the opportunity to develop a sense of self-identity in the family of origin, the chances of implementing a growth-producing process in his or her future family are diminished.

Despite the formality with which family theorists have presented various theoretical positions and systems of family therapy, there is a dearth of empirical evidence to support these assumptions. Framo (1976) states that the systematic investigation of this problem area is almost non-existent and long overdue.

In spite of the lack of systematic research, there are a few sources of rather sketchy empirical evidence.

Levy (1943) found a correlation between an overprotective attitude in mothers and deprivation of love in the mother's own childhood. Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, and Phillips (1976) found that a parent's sense of self-identity determined to a large extent the type of boundaries with which he or she was comfortable. In other words, if parents are secure with their own self-identities, clear boundaries can be developed within their own family. In a recent study, Penk, Robinowitz, Kidd and Nisle (1979) investigated a sample of heroin users' perceptions of their current families and the retrospective perceptions of their families of origin using the Family Environment Scale (Moos, Insel & Humphrey, 1974). Results indicated that drug abusers tended to recreate the family environment of their families of origin in their current families.

The present investigation was a first step in applying systematic research towards empirically validating the theory underlying the intergenerational perspective. In addition, this study investigated a relatively unexplored dimension in family research: the relationship between the perceptions of atmosphere in the family of origin and current family.

The Family Environment Scale

The measurement technique used in this study was the Family Environment Scale-Form R (FES; Moos et al., 1974). Moos and his associates (Insel & Moos, 1974) have studied nine different types of social environments and have developed Social Climate Scales for each of these environments: a) psychiatric

wards; b) community-oriented psychiatric treatment programs; c) correctional institutions; d) military basic training companies; e) university student residents; f) junior high and senior high schools; g) social task-oriented therapeutic groups; h) work milieus; and i) families. The theoretical impetus for the development of these scales comes from a social ecological framework (Moos, 1973) and the exact choice and wording of scale items were guided by the general formulation of environmental press (Murray, 1938). The dimensions or subscales on each of the nine Social Climate Scales were empirically derived from independent data obtained from respondents in that particular environment (Moos, 1974). Insel and Moos (1974) have identified three global dimensions which cut across all types of environments:

a) Relationship dimensions identify the nature and intensity of personal relationships within the environment. These dimensions assess the extent to which people are involved in the environment, the extent to which they support and help each other, and the extent to which there is spontaneity and free and open expression among family members.

b) Personal development dimensions assess the basic directions along which personal growth and self-enhancement tend to occur in the particular environment.

c) System maintenance and system change dimensions assess

the extent to which the environment is orderly, clear in its expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change.

In the development of the FES-Form R[1] (Moos, 1975), an initial pool of 200 items was administered to over 1000 individuals in a sample of 285 families. Families from all social classes were included to ensure that the resulting scale would be applicable to the broadest possible variety of family situations. Psychometric test construction criteria were used to select 90 true/false items which yield ten subscales and which cluster into three global dimensions. Descriptions of the ten subscales of the FES are presented in Table 1.

The test-retest reliabilities of individual scores on the FES were calculated for 47 family members in 9 families who took the FES twice, with approximately 8 weeks between testings. The test-retest reliabilities were reported (Moos et al., 1974) to range from a low of .68 for Independence to a high of .86 for Cohesion.

While the reliability of the FES has been demonstrated, evidence for its validity is sparse. The Preliminary Manual (Moos et al., 1974) provides some support for the construct validity of the FES by comparing the mean scores on the FES for 42 psychiatric and 42 matched "normal" families. The results were consistent with the predicted differences on the FES for the two groups.

Table 1

FES Subscale Descriptions

Subscale	Dimension
	RELATIONSHIP
1. Cohesion	The extent to which family members are concerned and committed to the family and the degree to which family members are helpful and supportive of each other.
2. Expressiveness	The extent to which family members are allowed and encouraged to act openly and to express their feelings directly.
3. Conflict	The extent to which the open expression of anger and aggression and generally conflictual interactions are characteristic of the family.
	PERSONAL GROWTH
4. Independence	The extent to which family members are encouraged to be assertive, self-sufficient, to make their own decisions and to think things out for themselves.
5. Achievement Orientation	The extent to which different types of activities (i.e., school and work) are cast into an achievement oriented or competitive framework.
6. Intellectual Cultural Orientation	The extent to which the family is concerned about political, social, intellectual and cultural activities.
7. Active Recreational Orientation	The extent to which the family participates actively in various kinds of recreational and sporting activities.
8. Moral Religious Emphasis	The extent to which the family actively discusses and emphasizes ethical and religious issues and values.

Table 1 continued

	SYSTEM MAINTENANCE
9. Organization	Measures how important order and organization is in the family in terms of structuring the family activities, financial planning, and explicitness and clarity in regard to family rules and responsibilities.
10. Control	Assesses the extent to which the family is organized in a hierarchical manner, the rigidity of family rules and procedures and the extent to which family members order each other around.

Using the families that comprised the normative sample (N=285), Moos and Moos (1976) conducted an investigation to identify homogeneous classes or types of families with respect to their profile similarity on the FES. A cluster analysis yielded six distinct clusters of families: Structure-Oriented, Independence-Oriented, Achievement-Oriented, Moral-Religious Oriented, Conflict-Oriented, and Expression-Oriented. The authors concluded that prior conceptualizations of family environments have been oversimplified. Family environments are often measured by two major parental attitudes: acceptance versus rejection and high versus low control. Moos and Moos argue that family environments cannot be described adequately using only two dimensions, even though the two dimensions may be of central importance.

Robertson and Hyde (Note 1) conducted a factor analytic study of the FES to determine whether the 10 subscales of the FES actually measure 10 dimensions (factors) of the family environment. The FES was administered to a sample of 344 high school freshmen and sophomores. The factor analysis indicated that the original 10 subscales of the FES do not emerge as separate factors. The authors suggest that the FES is best represented by seven factors: Group Cohesion, Conflict, Structure, Religion, Activities, Protestant Ethic, and Verbal-Intellectual Orientations. The investigators caution, however, that the nature of the subject population sampled (high school students) limits the generalizability

of their findings. They suggest that future research should determine whether or not their findings can be replicated with an adult population.

The FES Preliminary Manual (Moos et al., 1974) also presents the findings of three analyses that are important for the overall interpretation of FES data. First, to determine whether or not there are consistent sex differences in the way in which family social climates are perceived, a sample of 80 four-person families, comprised of a mother, father, son and daughter, were identified from the normative sample. The findings revealed that there were no consistent sex differences in perceptions of family social environments. The only significant difference that emerged was a tendency for mothers to perceive a somewhat higher emphasis on Active-Recreational Orientation than did fathers.

A second issue that was studied was whether or not there are any consistent parent-child differences in the perception of the family environment. In order to assess the degree to which family members agree on the characteristics of the family's social environment, Moos et al. (1974) developed the Family Incongruence Score. The Family Incongruence Score is obtained by comparing the ten FES subscale scores of each possible pair of family members. The differences between each pair of family members are obtained for each of the ten subscale scores. These differences are summed over the ten subscales yielding a single Family

Incongruence Score. The resulting score assesses the extent to which the pair of family members disagree about their family climate. Moos et al. (1974) reported that the average Family Incongruence Score for all 285 families in the normative sample was 16.74 (SD=5.38), which reflects a relatively low degree of incongruence. An investigation of this issue indicated that there were small but systematic differences in the ways in which parents and children perceived their family environments. On the average, children placed less emphasis on Cohesion and Expressiveness and somewhat more emphasis on Conflict that did parents. Children also rated their families somewhat lower on Independence, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation and Moral-Religious Emphasis and somewhat higher on Achievement Orientation and Active-Recreational Orientation. The authors point out, however, that the extent of agreement or disagreement among family members with regard to family climate varied considerably from family to family. The extent of agreement family members show with regard to the social climate of their families is itself an important characteristic.

A third issue that was studied pertained to relating family size to the FES subscales. In this study, the general tendency was for Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Independence to decrease with family size, whereas Conflict, Control, and Moral-Religious Emphasis increased.

A recent publication by the publishers of the FES

(Moos, Clayton, & Max, 1979) lists 50 sources that have used the FES to investigate various aspects of the family social climate. Of the 50 references cited, only 11 have been published to date. In the published articles, the FES has been utilized in the following ways: a) to investigate the post-treatment functioning of alcoholic patients (Bromet & Moos, 1977; Cronkite & Moos, 1980; and Moos, Bromet, Tsu & Moos, in press); b) to study the effect of fathers who are missing in action on the family atmosphere (Boss, 1977); c) as an assessment tool to aid nurses on a medical in-patient unit to evaluate patients' family climate (Eichel, 1978); d) to study the effects of maternal occupational status on the family atmosphere (Eiswirth-Neems & Handal, 1978); e) to investigate the family climate of heroin abusers (Penk, Robinowitz, Kidd, & Nisle, 1979); f) to study the differences in the environmental conditions between psychiatric and "normal" families (Scorresby & Christensen, 1976); g) as an instructional aid for studying the family in the classroom (Waters, in press); and h) to investigate depression as a consequence of "non-supportive" environments (Wetzel, 1978).

Purpose and Hypotheses

The present investigation, which was primarily exploratory in nature, had three principal goals: a) to begin applying systematic research towards empirically validating the theory underlying the intergenerational perspective; b) to assess the usefulness of the Family

Environment Scale in conducting intergenerational research; and c) to provide data that will help guide future hypothesis testing. Specifically, the present research was designed to explore the intergenerational relationship between husbands' and wives' perceptions of the psychosocial climate in their families of origin and current families using a relatively "normal" and homogeneous sample of married couples.

Theoretical positions stressing the importance of viewing the family as an intergenerational system formed the basis for three of the hypotheses of this study. This perspective predicts that the interaction patterns that an individual is exposed to in his or her family of origin have a decisive impact on interaction patterns in his or her current family. That is, previous styles of relating with members in the family of origin influence the interaction styles in future interpersonal relationships. Family theorists who endorse the intergenerational position conceptualize family interaction patterns in terms of boundaries which follow a continuum between attachment and separation and which form the basis for an individual's self-identity. In line with these theoretical predictions it was hypothesized that:

A. Wives' ratings on the FES for their current families would be significantly correlated with their ratings for their families of origin.

B. Husbands' ratings on the FES for their current families would be significantly correlated with their ratings for

their families of origin.

In a further step towards assessing the relationship between husbands' and wives' intergenerational ratings on the FES, it was also hypothesized that:

C. The Family Incongruence Score[2] between husbands' ratings on the FES for their current families and their families of origin would be significantly correlated with their wives' Family Incongruence Score between corresponding sets of ratings.

This hypothesis was formulated to assess the relationship between husbands' intergenerational incongruence between their perceptions of their current and past families and their wives' intergenerational incongruence between the perceptions of their two families. In line with the intergenerational position, and given the nature of the sample studied, it was hypothesized that marital partners with similar types of family interaction patterns (boundaries) should perceive a similar degree of incongruence between their families of origin and current families.

In addition, two other hypotheses were formulated. The first examined the relationship between couples' current family ratings, and the second examined the relationship between their past family ratings. The hypotheses were:

D. Wives' ratings on the FES for their current families would be significantly correlated with their husbands' ratings for their current families.

This hypothesis was guided by the fact that marital partners were rating the same family environment and should, therefore, show high agreement in their ratings.

E. Wives' ratings on the FES for their families of origin would be significantly correlated with their husbands' ratings for their families of origin.

This hypothesis was guided by empirical evidence which suggests that individuals who share similar backgounds are more naturally attracted to one another and are more likely to form lasting interpersonal relationships (Ferreira & Winter, 1974).

The present investigation also compared husbands' and wives' average FES ratings with those obtained by the normative sample. In addition, husbands' average FES ratings for their current families and families of origin were compared as well as wives' average FES ratings for their current and past families.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects for the study consisted of 66 faculty members from the University of Southern Mississippi and their spouses. Demographic data that were collected on the couples' current families are presented in Appendix A. In summary, the average age of the subjects was 40.65 (husbands, M=41.18; wives, M=39.12), the average length of marriage was 15.48 years, and the average number of children per couple was 1.6. The average age at which couples reported they were married was 24.40 (husbands, M=25.62; wives, M=23.17).

Demographic characteristics of husbands' and wives' families of origin are presented in Appendix B. Wives reported that they had an average of 2.09 siblings, that the majority of their fathers held skilled occupations, and that the majority of their mothers were classified as homemakers. Husbands reported having an average of 2.2 siblings, that their fathers also occupied more skilled jobs than any other occupation, and that the majority of their mothers also were homemakers.

Measuring Technique

Family atmosphere, or climate, was measured using the Family Environment Scale-Form R (Moos et al., 1974). The Family Environment Scale (FES) has been discussed in greater detail

in another section of this paper. Briefly, the FES is a standardized questionnaire containing 90 true/false items designed to measure the psychosocial atmosphere of families along ten dimensions or subscales that have been empirically shown to be important characteristics of family environments (Moos, 1975). These subscales are also clustered into three global dimensions that have been theorized to cut across all types of environments (Moos, 1973). Specifically, the subscales Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict comprise the Relationship Dimensions; Independence, Achievement Orientation, and Moral-Religious Emphasis comprise the Personal Growth Dimensions; and Organization and Control comprise the System Maintenance Dimensions.

Procedure

A letter (Appendix C) was sent to all married faculty members on the staff of the University of Southern Mississippi at Hattiesburg explaining the purpose of the study and inviting them to participate. A self-addressed post card was enclosed with the letter and those interested in volunteering were asked to return it to the experimenter. The letter indicated that they would be contacted by phone upon receipt of the post card.

The experimenter met with each couple who returned the post card. During the meeting, the experimenter presented a standardized statement which explained the purpose of the study, the couples' rights as human subjects, the general instructions for completing the research materials, and the

option of receiving feedback from their completed questionnaires (Appendix D).

Each individual who consented (Appendix E) to participate in the study was instructed to complete the FES twice: once for his or her current family and once for his or her family of origin. Each subject was also instructed to do the second rating immediately following the completion of the first. In a counterbalanced fashion, half of the couples were asked to complete the FES for their families of origin first, and the other half were asked to complete the FES for their current families first. The purpose of this counterbalancing was to control for order effects between family ratings since the couples were being asked to complete both ratings in the same sitting. The couples were also asked to complete three social data sheets which were intended to provide basic information about the composition of each couples' current family and their families of origin (Appendix F). The subjects were also given a card to return to the experimenter if they wished to receive feedback from their questionnaires, along with an envelope in which they were instructed to return all the completed research materials. No additional participation in the study was required of any of the couples.

Of the 85 couples who indicated that they were interested in participating in the study, 66 (77.6%) completed and returned all the necessary research materials for inclusion in the study.

Feedback

Each couple requesting feedback was mailed four profiles summarizing their ratings on the FES for their current family and their families of origin with an indication of the comparison of their ratings with the average ratings of 285 families in the normative sample (Appendix G, for example). A description of each of the ten FES subscales was included to help them interpret their profiles (Table 1). Feedback participants were also mailed an abstract summarizing the overall results of the study (Appendix H). Sixty-two (93.9%) of the 66 couples in the study requested feedback.

Data Analysis

The five main hypotheses of the study were assessed by means of Pearson correlation coefficients. Two additional sets of correlations were also conducted to assess the relationship between the ratings of those couples who rated their current families first and those couples who rated their families of origin first to determine if the order in which family ratings were made was different for the two counterbalanced groups. Differences between the average FES ratings made by the subjects in the present study and the average ratings in the normative sample as well as the differences between both husbands and wives intergenerational ratings were assessed by *t*-tests.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The Main Hypotheses

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients for each of the ten FES subscales for hypotheses A,B,D and E. Hypothesis C assessed the relationship between husbands' and wives' Family Incongruence Scores which are a measurement of agreement between a pair of ratings collapsed across all ten FES subscales. These scores were analyzed by means of a single Pearson correlation coefficient (not included in Table 2).

Hypothesis A predicted that wives' ratings on the FES for their current families would be significantly correlated with their ratings for their families of origin. The findings only partially supported this hypothesis. The results revealed significant correlations on the FES subscales of Conflict (r=.24), Achievement Orientation (r=.23), Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.66), and Organization (r=.48).

Hypothesis B predicted that husbands' ratings on the FES for their current families would be significantly correlated with their ratings for their families of origin. The results indicated significant correlations on four of the FES subscales: Independence (r=.28), Achievement Orien-

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients

For Hypotheses A, B, D, and E

FES Subscales	Hypothesis A WIVES' CF with WIVES' FO	Hypothesis B HUSBANDS' CF with HUSBANDS' FO	Hypothesis D HUSBANDS' CF with WIVES' CF	Hypothesis E HUSBANDS' FO with WIVES' FO
1. Cohesion	.12	-.01	.24*	.24*
2. Expressiveness	.02	.01	.31**	.26*
3. Conflict	.24*	.11	.43****	.30**
4. Independence	.15	.28**	.41****	.30
5. Achievement Orientation	.23*	.20*	.36***	-.00
6. Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	.14	.15	.58****	.15
7. Active-Recreational Orientation	.08	.29**	.52****	.10
8. Moral-Religious Emphasis	.66****	.49****	.85****	.19
9. Organization	.48****	.13	.46****	.08
10 Control	.10	.13	.41****	.16

Note. N=66 in all cases. df=65 in all cases. CF=Current Family. FO=Family of Origin.

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .005$
**** $p < .001$

tation (r=.20), Active-Recreational Orientation (r=.29), and Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.49), all of which fall within the Personal Growth Dimensions (Moos et al., 1974).

Hypothesis C predicted that the Family Incongruence Score between husbands' ratings on the FES for their current families and their families of origin would be significantly correlated with their wives' Family Incongruence Score between a corresponding set of FES ratings. The results supported this hypothesis ($r(65)$=.25, p=.02) indicating a similar amount of total incongruence across the ten FES subscales between husbands' and wives' current families and their respective families of origin.

Hypothesis D predicted that wives' ratings on the FES for their current families would be significantly correlated with their husbands' ratings for their current families. The results revealed that this hypothesis was supported on all ten subscales of the FES (r's ranged from .24 for Cohesion to .85 for Moral-Religious Emphasis) indicating a strong degree of relationship between husbands' and wives' ratings of their current family environment.

Hypothesis E predicted that wives' ratings on the FES for their families of origin would be significantly correlated with their husbands' ratings for their families of origin. The results only partially supported this hypothesis. Only the FES subscales of Cohesion (r=.24), Expressiveness (r=.26), and Conflict (r=.30), which comprise what Moos et al. (1974)

have identified as the Relationship Dimensions, were significantly correlated.

Order Effects

All couples were asked to rate both their current families and their families of origin on the FES in one sitting. In order to assess the effect that one rating might have on the other, half the couples were instructed to rate their current families first and the other half were asked to rate their families of origin first in a counterbalanced fashion. In order to determine if order of administration was a factor in the obtained results, the FES ratings of couples who rated their current families first (N=32) and those couples who rated their families of origin first (N=34) were analyzed separately and the results were compared with the original results obtained when the two groups were combined. Table 3 summarizes the Pearson correlation coefficients for hypotheses A, B, D and E for both order effect samples. Table 4 summarizes the means and standard deviations of the two groups ratings on the FES for each of the ten FES subscales.

The findings for hypothesis A indicated that for those couples who rated their families of origin first, the only findings that were replicated were on Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.63) and Organization (r=.52). For those couples who rated their current families first, all of the original findings of the overall sample emerged: Conflict (r=.36), Achievement Orientation (r=.34), Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.71), and

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Order Effects

(Hypotheses A, B, D, and E)

FES Subscales	Current Family Rated First				Family of Origin Rated First			
	WCF WITH WFO (N=32)	HCF with HFO (N=32)	HCF with WCF (N=32)	HFO with WFO (N=32)	WCF with WFO (N=34)	HCF with HFO (N=34)	HCF with WCF (N=34)	HFO with WFO (N=34)
1. Cohesion	.11	.05	.10	.48***	.15	-.10	.42**	.00
2. Expressiveness	-.23	.08	.28	.41**	.26	-.06	.34**	.09
3. Conflict	.36*	.08	.43***	.36*	.17	.16	.46***	.29
4. Independence	.00	.12	.35*	.10	.27	.46***	.46***	.26
5. Achievement Orientation	.34*	.16	.31*	-.02	.14	.24	.40**	.01
6. Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	.12	.24	.57****	.07	.16	.03	.52****	.21
7. Active-Recreational Orientation	.04	.20	.49****	.00	.11	.32*	.51****	.16
8. Moral-Religious Emphasis	.71****	.51****	.78****	.37*	.63****	.46***	.91****	.06
9. Organization	.44**	-.13	.24	-.02	.52****	.44***	.66****	.18
10. Control	.13	.06	.31*	.28	.07	.15	.51****	.03

Note. WFC=Wives' Current Families. WFO=Wives' Families of Origin. HCF=Husbands' Current Families. HFO=Husbands' Families of Origin.

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .005$
**** $p < .001$

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Couples' FES Ratings

For the Two Counterbalanced Samples

FES Subscales		Family of Origin Rated First		Current Family Rated Second		Current Family Rated First		Family of Origin Rated Second	
		Husbands (N=34)	Wives (N=34)	Husbands (N=34)	Wives (N=34)	Husbands (N=32)	Wives (N=32)	Husbands (N=32)	Wives (N=32)
1. Cohesion	M	6.97	6.65	8.00	8.06	7.75	7.88	6.16	6.78
	SD	2.20	2.77	1.33	1.25	1.11	2.00	2.50	2.62
2. Expressiveness	M	4.12	3.94	6.18	6.44	6.16	6.09	3.34	3.66
	SD	1.97	2.30	1.71	2.18	1.16	2.18	2.13	2.40
3. Conflict	M	2.65	3.24	2.18	1.65	2.06	2.22	3.34	2.97
	SD	2.16	3.01	1.71	2.13	1.72	2.00	2.50	2.36
4. Independence	M	6.56	6.59	6.94	7.21	6.66	6.78	5.84	5.84
	SD	1.46	1.84	1.77	1.57	1.80	1.66	2.08	1.97
5. Achievement Orientation	M	5.94	6.06	5.65	5.59	5.50	5.53	6.09	6.16
	SD	1.58	1.90	1.77	1.33	1.44	1.34	1.71	1.75
6. Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	M	4.26	5.09	7.65	7.76	6.78	6.84	3.72	4.81
	SD	2.82	2.82	1.28	1.16	1.62	2.10	2.26	2.87
7. Active-Recreational Orientation	M	4.74	4.50	6.32	5.74	5.53	5.06	3.88	4.13
	SD	2.33	2.69	1.85	1.64	1.97	2.06	2.27	2.25
8. Moral-Religious Emphasis	M	5.56	6.21	5.24	5.18	6.03	6.53	6.91	6.47
	SD	2.36	2.37	2.76	2.87	2.53	2.44	1.73	2.21
9. Organization	M	6.62	6.41	5.82	5.74	5.91	5.94	6.59	6.50
	SD	1.89	2.20	2.11	2.18	2.44	1.79	2.01	2.44
10. Control	M	5.29	5.88	2.91	3.15	3.63	3.66	6.06	6.19
	SD	2.10	2.40	1.52	2.35	2.04	2.06	2.21	2.25

Oranization (r=.44).

The results for hypothesis B indicated that for those couples who rated their families of origin first, three of the four original findings emerged: Independence (r=.46), Active-Recreational Orientation (r=.32), and Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.46). In addition, there was one other significant finding for Organization (r=.44). For those couples who rated their current families first, the only significant finding which emerged, which replicated the results of the overall sample, was on Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.51).

For Hypothesis C, the results for the overall sample were replicated when couples either rated their families of origin first ($r(33)$=.28,p=.05) or when they rated their current families first ($r(31)$=.28,p=.05).

The results for hypothesis D indicated that for those couples who rated their current families first, seven of the ten original findings emerged: Conflict (r=.43), Independence (r=.35), Achievement Orientation (r=.31), Intellectual-Cultural Orientation (r=.57), Active-Recreational Orientation (r=.49), Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.78), and Control (r=.31). For those couples who rated their families of origin first, the results replicated the findings for the overall sample revealing significant correlations (r's ranged from .34 on Expressiveness to .91 on Moral-Religious Emphasis) on all ten FES subscales.

The findings for hypothesis E revealed that for those

couples who rated their families of origin first, no significant findings emerged. For those couples who rated their current families first, the results essentially replicated the findings of the overall group: Cohesion (r=.48), Expressiveness (r=.41), and Conflict (r=.36); with an additional significant finding on Moral-Religious Emphasis (r=.37).

Comparisons with the Normative Sample

Table 5 presents the comparisons between the means and standard deviations of the 66 couples' four ratings on the FES for their current families and their families of origin and the average ratings by the families (N=285) in the normative sample (Moos et al., 1974). Inspection of Table 5 reveals that the couples in the present study rated their current families significantly higher than the normative sample on Cohesion, Expressiveness, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, and Organization. They also rated their current families higher, but not significantly different from that of the normative sample, on Independence. The couples in the present study rated their current families significantly lower than the normative sample on Conflict and Control. Only the wives' ratings on Active-Recreational Orientation were significantly lower than the average rating of the normative sample. The couples also rated their current families lower on Achievement Orientation, and husbands rated their current families lower on Active-Recreational Orientation, however, neither was significantly

Table 5

Comparisons Between Couples' FES Ratings for their Current Families and Families of Origin and the Normative Sample

FES Subscales		Normative Sample (N=265)	Current Family Ratings: Wives (N=66)	Current Family Ratings: Husbands (N=66)	Family of Origin Ratings: Wives (N=66)	Family of Origin Ratings: Husbands (N=66)
1. Cohesion	M	6.36	7.97 (t=7.93)**	7.88 (t=10.13)**	6.71 (t=1.06)	6.58 (t=.78)
	SD	1.86	1.65	1.22	2.68	2.29
2. Expressiveness	M	5.43	6.27 (t=3.15)**	6.17 (t=3.64)**	3.80 (t=5.66)**	3.74 (t=6.63)**
	SD	1.49	2.17	1.65	2.34	2.07
3. Conflict	M	4.65	1.92 (t=10.71)**	2.12 (t=12.02)**	3.11 (t=4.63)**	2.98 (t=5.80)**
	SD	2.05	2.07	1.71	2.70	2.34
4. Independence	M	6.67	7.00 (t=1.66)	6.80 (t=.63)	6.23 (t=1.85)	6.21 (t=2.06)*
	SD	1.23	1.62	1.68	1.93	1.81
5. Achievement Orientation	M	5.64	5.56 (t=.49)	5.58 (t=.30)	6.12 (t=2.14)*	6.02 (t=1.86)
	SD	1.66	1.33	1.61	1.82	1.63
6. Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	M	6.15	7.32 (t=5.49)**	7.23 (t=5.81)**	4.95 (t=3.45)**	4.00 (t=6.83)**
	SD	1.98	1.73	1.51	2.83	2.56
7. Active-Recreational Orientation	M	6.19	5.41 (t=3.39)**	5.94 (t=1.05)	4.32 (t=6.13)**	4.32 (t=6.54)**
	SD	1.66	1.87	1.94	2.48	2.32
8. Moral-Religious Emphasis	M	4.55	5.83 (t=3.81)**	5.62 (t=3.27)**	6.33 (t=6.33)**	6.26 (t=6.43)**
	SD	2.15	2.73	2.66	2.28	2.16
9. Organization	M	5.27	5.83 (t=2.26)*	5.86 (t=2.12)*	6.45 (t=4.17)**	6.61 (t=5.61)**
	SD	2.03	1.99	2.26	2.30	1.94
10. Control	M	4.80	3.39 (t=5.88)**	3.26 (t=6.88)**	6.03 (t=4.30)**	5.67 (t=3.26)**
	SD	1.84	2.21	1.82	2.32	2.17

Note. df=65 in all cases.

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

different from the normative sample.

The couples rated their families of origin significantly higher than the normative sample on Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, Organization, and Control. Wives' ratings for Achievement Orientation were significantly higher than the normative sample. Couples' ratings on Cohesion and Husbands' ratings for Achievement Orientation were higher, but did not differ significantly from the normative sample. Couples rated their families of origin significantly lower than the normative sample on Expressiveness, Conflict, and Intellectual-Cultural Orientation. Husbands' ratings for Independence also were significantly lower than the mean ratings of the normative sample. Wives' ratings on Independence were also lower than that of the average rating in the normative sample, but not significantly so.

Husbands' and wives' ratings on the FES for their current families yielded a significantly ($t(65)=5.00, p<.01$) lower Family Incongruence Score (M=13.55, SD=5.18) than the average Family Incongruence Score of the normative sample (M=16.74, SD=5.38). Husbands' and wives' ratings on the FES for their families of origin produced a significantly ($t(65)=6.30, p<.01$) higher Family Incongruence Score (M=22.29, SD=7.16) than that of the normative sample.

Comparisons of Couples' Intergenerational Ratings

Table 6 summarizes the t scores of comparisons between the intergenerational ratings on the FES for both husbands and

Table 6

Comparisons of Husbands' and Wives' FES Ratings

for their Current Families and Families of Origin

(t-tests for correlated means)

	Wives' Ratings	Husbands' Ratings
	Current Family vs Family of Origin t	Current Family vs Family of Origin t
1. Cohesion	3.44****	4.07****
2. Expressiveness	6.37****	7.47****
3. Conflict	3.21***	2.86**
4. Independence	2.71**	2.28*
5. Achievement Orientation	2.29*	1.74
6. Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	6.20****	9.48****
7. Active-Recreational Orientation	2.98***	5.15****
8. Moral-Religious Emphasis	1.91	2.10*
9. Organization	2.29*	2.17*
10. Control	7.04****	7.39****

Note. N=66. df=65.

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .005$
**** $p < .001$

wives, using correlated means *t*-tests. The results indicated that both members of the dyad rated their current families significantly higher than their families of origin on Cohesion, Expressiveness, Independence, and Active-Recreational Orientation. The couples rated their current families significantly lower than their families of origin on Conflict, Organization, and Control. In addition, wives rated their current families significantly lower than their families of origin on Achievement Orientation, and husbands rated their current families significantly lower than their families of origin on Moral-Religious Emphasis.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study investigated a relatively unexplored dimension in family studies: the relationship between married couples' perceptions of the psychosocial atmosphere, or climate, in their current families and their families of origin. Previous studies investigating intergenerational influences on interpersonal relationships and behavior have tended to focus on the individual personality traits of family members. This investigation studied the collective personality of the family from a social climate perspective which assumes that "environments have personalities just like people do and can be similarly portrayed with a great deal of accuracy and detail" (Moos, 1974; p. 179).

The present investigation predicted that the family environments of married couples' families of origin would have an impact on the formation of the psychosocial climate in their current families.

Current and Past Family Ratings from an Intergenerational Perspective

Those who stress the importance of viewing the family as an intergenerational system predict that values and interaction patterns that are learned in an individual's family of origin have an impact on the ideas and interaction patterns in

his or her current family. The present study contends that the psychosocial atmosphere or climate of the family can accurately characterize a family's values and interaction patterns. Three of the main hypotheses of this study dealt specifically with assessing these theoretical positions. Hypotheses A and B predicted that the intergenerational ratings on the FES for both husbands and wives would be similar, suggesting that the relationship "style" or interaction patterns in their families of origin was perpetuated in their current families. The results revealed that wives rated their current and past families significantly similar on Conflict, Achievement-Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, and Organization. The direction of these ratings indicates that the values and interaction patterns in wives' families of origin were characterized by an atmosphere of tranquility, some degree of achievement motivation, an emphasis on ethical and religious convictions and personal values, and a sense of organization and clarity in regard to family rules and responsibilities. Husbands rated their current and past families significantly similar on the FES subscales of Independence, Achievement Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, and Moral-Religious Emphasis. The direction of the husbands' ratings suggests that the values and interaction patterns in husbands' families of origin were characterized by a family atmosphere emphasizing autonomy, achievement motivation, ethical and religious convictions and personal values, as well as an atmosphere which encouraged family participation in recrea-

tional activities. Taken together these findings indicate that husbands grew up in families which stressed Personal Growth Dimensions and placed less emphasis on Relationship and System Maintenance Dimensions. On the other hand, the findings also indicate that wives grew up in families which emphasized Relationship, Personal Growth, and System Maintenance Dimensions.

In addition to predicting that the family interaction styles that are learned in the family of origin will be perpetuated in future interpersonal relationships, the intergenerational systems perspective also emphasizes the concept of boundaries which refers to a specific relationship pattern in the family. Minuchin (1974) postulates three relationship patterns among family members which are characterized along a continuum between attachment and separation. In the present study, both husbands and wives FES ratings for their current and past families were consistent with a family style characterized by clear boundaries which provides for its members a balance between attachment and separation. This conclusion is based primarily on husbands' and wives' ratings on the FES subscales of Cohesion and Independence. The findings revealed that both husbands and wives perceived their families of origin and current families as emphasizing an atmosphere relatively high in Cohesion and Independence. These two FES subscales reflect the degree to which family members are concerned and committed to the family and the degree to which family members are helpful and supportive of each other, as well as the extent

to which family members are encouraged to be assertive, self-sufficient, to make their own decisions and to think things out for themselves. Furthermore, the fact that couples also perceived their current family environments as emphasizing Cohesion and Independence suggests that husbands and wives formed a family with clear boundaries, an interaction style learned in their separate families of origin. In addition, it might also be concluded that individuals brought to their marriages a clear sense of self, a characteristic that the intergenerational perspective asserts is only developed in a family with clear boundaries. These findings are also consistent with the fact that the couples in this study represent relatively "normal", successful individuals.

In addition to assessing the relationship between husbands' and wives' separate intergenerational FES ratings, the present study also assessed the relationship between couples' intergenerational ratings by means of the Family Incongruence Score. The Family Incongruence Score (Moos et al., 1974) assesses the extent to which family members agree or disagree with respect to their current family environments; that is, within-generation comparisons. In addition, the Family Incongruence Score could also be used to obtain some information regarding the agreement or disagreement between an individual's ratings of his or her family of origin and current family; that is, an intergenerational comparison. In the present study, Hypothesis C predicted that there would be a relationship between husbands' Family Incongruence Scores

between their current families and their families of origin and wives' Family Incongruence Scores between their current and past families. The results supported this prediction indicating that both husbands and wives perceived a similar amount of incongruence between their families of origin and current families. That is, both husbands and wives rated their current families as varying from their families of origin to the same degree when compared on a single overall indicator of incongruence - the Family Incongruence Score.

One problem that arises when interpreting the Family Incongruence Score is the fact that it does not indicate along what dimensions or subscales of the FES the incongruence lies. Under certain circumstances, the Family Incongruence Score can be misleading which underscores the need for caution when using this single indicator of agreement between sets of FES ratings.

Ratings of Current Families

As predicted, husbands' and wives' FES ratings for their current families were significantly similar on all dimensions of the scale. The fact that husbands' and wives' perceptions of their current families were very similar suggests that the FES has high interjudge reliability and would appear to be one more step in the direction of showing the construct validity of the instrument.

The only difference between current family ratings of husbands and wives on the FES was on the Active-Recreational Orientation subscale. Husbands rated their current families

higher on this dimension than did their wives. The fact that males tend to emphasize recreational and sporting activities more than females may be an explanation of this difference. Since only one out of ten of the comparisons between husbands' and wives' ratings for their current families was significant, this finding might also have occurred simply by chance.

When compared to the average ratings by all families in the normative sample (Moos et al., 1974), the couples in the present study rated their current families significantly different along all of the Relationship and System Maintenance Dimensions and on three of the five Personal Growth Dimensions. Overall, the average FES profile of the couples in the present study describes a family environment with more than usual emphasis on cohesiveness, open expression of feelings, and a low level of tension among family members. The profile is further indicative of a family environment which places: a) greater emphasis on discussing political, social, and cultural issues; b) less emphasis on engaging in recreational activities as a family; c) greater emphasis on ethical and religious convictions; and d) greater emphasis on personal values. Finally, the average profile of the couples' current family environment places greater emphasis on order and clarity within the family and also emphasizes an atmosphere which is not rigid or fixed but rather is responsive to change. Thus, a comparison of the FES profile of couples' current families with the average profile of families in the normative sample revealed that couples in the present study assigned signifi-

cantly different ratings to their current families than did the families in the normative sample in such directions which might be expected from a sample of university professors and their spouses.

Ratings of Families of Origin

It was predicted that the relatively homogeneous sample of couples employed in this investigation would perceive a high degree of similarity between their families of origin. The results revealed that husbands and wives rated their families of origin similarly on all subscales of the Relationship Dimension on the FES. Specifically, husbands and wives each rated the climate in their past families as high in Cohesion and Expressiveness and low in Conflict. These findings might indicate that couples' families of origin emphasized and encouraged positive interpersonal relationships among family members and that this similar style of relating may have contributed to their interpersonal attraction. These findings are consistent with other research which indicates that variables assessing the "relationship" between individuals account for the greatest portion of the variance when predicting success in marriage (Troll & Bengtson, 1979). In addition, Ferreira and Winter (1974) have pointed out that two individuals who come from the same homogeneous subculture and who share many of the same views and values are more predisposed to form happy and satisfactory relationships.

In comparison to the average ratings of the FES normative sample (Moos et al., 1974), husbands' and wives' ratings

of their families of origin yielded similar profiles which differed from that of the normative sample group. Specifically, both husbands and wives rated their families of origin as placing more emphasis on Relationship and System Maintenance Dimensions and less emphasis on the Personal Growth Dimension. An inspection of the ratings of current and past families revealed that both husbands and wives gave more favorable ratings to their current families than they did to their families of origin on all subscales of the FES. This is consistent with the findings in the normative sample by Moos et al. (1974) who found a small but systematic difference between parents' and children's perceptions of their family environment with children giving less favorable ratings along Relationship and Personal Growth Dimensions than did their parents.

Methodological Issues

A number of methodological issues have been raised by this investigation. First, while the generalizability of these findings is greatly limited by the nature of the sampling, there were also a number of advantages. By sampling a relatively homogeneous group of married couples the amount of error variance was greatly reduced, thus increasing the power of the statistical analyses performed, as well as increasing the confidence in the interpretations given to the findings of this study. Future research is needed to determine whether or not the findings of this investigation can be replicated using samples of married couples representing other subcul-

tural backgrounds.

Second, there has been much criticism regarding the use of objective questionnaires and recall methods when studying family interaction patterns (Fontana, 1966). The critics of these procedures contend that they are highly susceptible to a host of experimental pitfalls. Penk et al. (1979), who employed a design similar to the one used in the present study, argue quite cogently that "retrospective data are a legitimate source of data for anything that they can be shown to predict reliably and validly. The retrospective view may be a source for generating hypotheses, at least; the retrospective view merits examination on the principle that how a person sees the past may influence how and what the individual does about the present and the future" (p. 298).

Third, the differences between the ratings of those couples who rated their current families first (N=34) and those who rated their families of origin first (N=32) led to two conclusions. First, the results for the two counterbalanced samples revealed relatively good correspondence with the findings for the overall sample (N=66) supporting the validity of the original results and interpretations. Specifically, this conclusion is based on three observations: a) fifteen of the twenty-one original findings emerged in each of the partitioned samples; b) although the magnitudes of the correlations in the two partitioned samples did not in some instances replicate the findings in the overall group, they did, however, all indicate a relationship in the same

direction; and c) only two additional findings emerged in the partitioned samples that were not obtained in the overall sample. With respect to the specific FES subscales, the results for the two counterbalanced samples revealed perfect correspondence with the findings for the overall sample on the Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, and Control. Findings for the two partitioned samples also revealed approximately a 75% overall correspondence on the FES subscales of Conflict, Independence, Active-Recreational Orientation, and Organization and approximately a 50% overall correspondence on the FES subscales of Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Achievement Orientation.

Even though husbands and wives were consistent in the direction of their ratings for their current and past families regardless of what family was being rated first, the findings from the partitioned samples indicate that the first rating had an influence on the second. For example, when husbands and wives rated their current families first, it appeared that the ratings assigned to their families of origin were significantly lowered. Just the opposite trend was observed when husbands and wives rated their families of origin first. In addition, the fact that couples' current families were consistently rated at the upper or lower portion of the scale than were their families of origin greatly diminished the amount of possible scale variation deflating the value of r, thus influencing the obtained results. The study by Penk et al. (1979) did not employ a counterbalanced design so no compari-

sons could be made across studies for a similar order effect. Future research is needed to investigate the exact nature of this methodological issue.

Summary

In summary, the major findings of this investigation revealed that: a) husbands' FES ratings between their current families and families of origin suggest that they place more emphasis on Personal Growth Dimensions; b) wives' FES ratings between their current and past families suggest that they emphasize all three dimensions (Relationship, Personal Growth, and System Maintenance) assessed by the FES; c) couples perceived a similar degree of incongruence between their current families and their families of origin; d) couples' current family ratings on the FES were similar along all dimensions of the scale; and e) couples' ratings on the FES for their families of origin were similar on the Relationship Dimension. Findings for the two counterbalanced samples revealed relatively good correspondence with the findings for the overall sample, and, in addition, the findings also indicated that the first family rating had an influence on the second rating with respect to relative scale position. The fact that couples' current families were assigned very high or very low ratings affected the outcome of the findings in the two partitioned samples.

Overall, the results of this investigation were consistent with the intergenerational systems perspective which stresses the importance of the family of origin and its spe-

cific relationship pattern (boundaries) on the formation of subsequent interpersonal relationships. In general, the Family Environment Scale appears to be a promising instrument for the use in intergenerational family research. One logical follow up to this study would be to investigate the intergenerational relationship of atmosphere in the families of origin and current families of couples whose marriages are in distress or whose marriages have ended in divorce.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Three additional forms of the Family Environment Scale have also been developed which share the identical items that comprise Form R. Form S, a 40 item Short Form, permits the relatively rapid assessment of either large families and/or groups of families. Form I, the Ideal Family Form, and Form E, the Expectations Form, are comprised of the identical 90 items that make up form R and vary only in terms of the instructional sets given to raters. Briefly, Form I was developed to measure the goals and value orientations of family members, and Form E was designed to measure what family members expect a family to be.

[2]While the Family Incongruence Score was developed to assess the intrafamily, or intragenerational agreement between a set of FES ratings, the present investigation used the Family Incongruence Score to assess the intergenerational agreement between an individual's current and past families.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF COUPLES' CURRENT FAMILIES

Demographic Characteristics	Total Sample N=132	Wives N=66	Husbands N=66
Average Age	40.15 (SD=10.87)	39.12 (SD=10.82)	41.18 (SD=10.91)
Average Number of Children per Couple	1.6	--	--
Average Age When Married	24.40 (SD=5.79)	23.17 (SD=5.20)	25.62 (SD=6.38)
Average Number of Years Married	15.48 (SD=10.07)	--	--
Education			
Graduate School	86 (65%)	33 (50%)	53 (80%)
College Graduate	29 (22%)	19 (29%)	10 (15%)
Some College	7 (5%)	6 (9%)	1 (2%)
High School	8 (6%)	7 (11%)	1 (2%)
Unknown	2 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Occupations			
Professional	77 (58%)	28 (42%)	49 (74%)
Lesser Professionals	20 (15%)	13 (20%)	7 (11%)
Minor Professionals	4 (3%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)
Clerical	5 (4%)	5 (8%)	0 (0%)
Skilled	2 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Homemakers	14 (11%)	14 (21%)	0 (0%)
Unknown	10 (7%)	3 (5%)	7 (11%)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF HUSBANDS'

AND WIVES' FAMILIES OF ORIGIN

Demographic Characteristics	Total Sample N=132	Wives N=66	Husbands N=66
Sibling			
Total Number	300	143	157
Average per Subject	2.33	2.23	2.42
Number of Brothers	157	66	91
Number of Sisters	143	77	66
Fathers' Occupations			
Higher Professionals	22 (17%)	13 (20%)	9 (14%)
Lesser Professionals	17 (13%)	9 (14%)	8 (12%)
Minor Professionals	29 (22%)	15 (23%)	14 (21%)
Clerical	7 (5%)	4 (6%)	3 (5%)
Semiskilled	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)
Unemployed	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)
Retired	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)
Unknown	10 (7%)	8 (12%)	2 (3%)
Skilled	39 (30%)	17 (26%)	22 (33%)
Mothers' Occupations			
Higher Professionals	1 (1%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Lesser Professionals	15 (11%)	10 (15%)	5 (8%)
Minor Professionals	8 (6%)	4 (6%)	4 (6%)
Clerical	18 (14%)	10 (15%)	8 (12%)
Skilled	6 (5%)	2 (3%)	4 (6%)
Semiskilled	4 (3%)	1 (2%)	3 (5%)
Homemakers	75 (57%)	34 (52%)	41 (62%)
Unknown	5 (3%)	4 (6%)	1 (2%)

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